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CONSULTATIONS HELD BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMISSION WITH THE BUREAUX OR THE CHAIRPERSONS OF THE PRINCIPAL SUBSIDIARY BODIES AND THE WORKING PARTIES REPORTING DIRECTLY TO THE COMMISSION

(Decision B (46), paragraph 4)

Report of the Chairman of the Commission

Introductory remarks

1. In accordance with decision B (47), in particular its operative paragraph 4, the Chairman of the Commission, together with the Executive Secretary, arranged the consultations shown in Table 1 below.

2. Most consultations were held when the representatives of the Bureaux were in Geneva on the occasion of the annual session of their Subsidiary Body or for another meeting. When Subsidiary Bodies did not meet between April and December 1992, special meetings were arranged in order to finalize the present report early in January 1993.

3. For most of the consultations, the Executive Secretary was accompanied by a member of his staff and/or by a representative of the Division concerned.

4. The consultations were held in a constructive spirit which was appreciated by the participants. All of them indicated that such consultations constituted a useful instrument of direct communication between the Subsidiary Bodies and the Commission, and suggested that the experience should be continued in future years.

5. The consultations have all followed the same lines and were based on the same set of questions so as to permit a fair comparison of the indications given by the different Bureaux.

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Table 1

Date	Subsidiary Body	Bureaux C: Chairperson fC: former Chairperson V-C: Vice-Chairperson		Country
14 May	Working Party on Standardization Policies (later referred to as **STAND**)	C: V-C:	Mr S. Warshaw Mr S. Averin	United States Russian Federation
2 June	Senior Economic Advisers to ECE Governments (**EC.AD**)	C: fC: V-C:	Mr F. Levcik Mrs H. Wasilewska Mr J.P. Pagé	Austria Poland France
9 June	Conference of European Statisticians (**CES**)	C:	Mr C. Malaguerra	Switzerland
23 September	Working Party on Facilitation of International Trade Procedures (**TRADE/WP.4**)	C WP.4: V-C WP.4 C GE.1: C GE.2: V-C GE.2	Mr V. David Mr T. Blomfeldt Mr R. Walker Mr E. Goffin Mr D. Dima	Czechoslovakia Finland United Kingdom Belgium Romania
25 September	Senior Advisers to ECE Governments on Science and Technology (**SC.TECH**)	C: V-C:	Mr G. Kint Mr M. Kepka	Belgium Poland
9 October	Working Party on the Chemical Industry (**CHEM**)	C: V-C:	Mr V. Kamenicky M. V. Evsioukov	United States Russian Federation
19 October	Timber Committee (**TIM**)	C: V-C: V-C:	Mr D. Darr Mr D. Lipman Mr P. Lavarde	United States Russian Federation France
23 October	Working Party on Steel (**STEEL**)	C: fC: V-C:	Mr J. Borak Mr A. Signora Mr U. Meiswinkel	Czechoslovakia France Germany

Date	Subsidiary Body	Bureaux C: Chairperson fC: former Chairperson V-C: Vice-Chairperson		Country
23 October	Working Party on Engineering Industries and Automation (**ENG.AUT**)	C: V-C:	Mr S. Dekany Miss J. Ory	Hungary France
6 November	Inland Transport Committee (**TRANS**)	C: V-C:	Mr P. Danjord Mr D. Valasek	Norway Czechoslovakia
9 November a/	Committee on Energy (**ENERGY**)	C: V-C:	Mr J. Lambotte Mr I. Szergenyi	France Hungary
18 November	Committee on Agriculture (**AGRI**)	C: V-C: V-C:	Mr H. Redl Mr K. Hirsch Mr M. Maco	Austria Germany Czechoslovakia
7 December	Committee on the Development of Trade (**TRADE**)	C: V-C:	Mr J. Kaczurba Mr W. van Ditmars	Poland Netherlands
9 December b/	Working Party on Human Settlements (**HBP**)	C: fC: V-C: V-C: V-C:	Mr J. Tutenuit Miss Zaniewska Miss M. Paumen Mr L. Karlberg Mr P. Gurtner	France Poland United States Sweden Switzerland
16 December	Senior Advisers to ECE Governments on Environmental and Water Problems (**ENVWA**)	C:	Mr K. Bärlund	Finland

a/ In the absence of the Chairman, the meeting was chaired by the Executive Secretary; representatives of the Chairman and of the Vice-Chairman of the Commission attended.

b/ In the absence of the Chairman, the meeting was chaired by the Vice-Chairman of the Commission; a representative of the Chairman attended.

6. The main objective of the consultations with the Bureaux of the Subsidiary Bodies was "to identify difficulties in the implementation of their work programmes and facilitate the further streamlining of their activities so as to ensure the most efficient use of existing resources" (decision B (47), para. 4). The efforts of the different Subsidiary Bodies to assist countries in transition were also discussed.

7. The present report synthesizes the views expressed by the representatives of the Bureaux of the Subsidiary Bodies consulted. The hope is that it will provide a general overview of the activities of the "Technical Bodies" of the Commission.

8. Chapter 1 provides an overall synthesis of the consultations held in 1992. Chapter 2 summarizes views expressed by most of the Bureaux (but not necessarily all of them) and focuses on cross-sectoral issues. Chapter 3 presents the comparative advantages of the ECE over other relevant organizations, as they are perceived by the representatives of the Bureaux of the Subsidiary Bodies; this chapter also includes views expressed by some Bureaux, focusing on specific issues.

9. This report presents the views expressed by the Bureaux during the fifteen consultations held in 1992 and does not question the pertinence of the indications given on these occasions. The views expressed by these representatives of the national experts in the different fields of activity of the Commission do not always correspond to the more global appreciation made at the level of the Commission itself. They demonstrate that there are different viewpoints or criteria to evaluate the work performed by the Commission through its Subsidiary Bodies.

10. In summarizing and synthesizing the views expressed by the Bureaux, some minor variatioans have not been reflected in the interests of consistency. Nevertheless, the report reflects the way the various inputs of the Subsidiary Bodies have been received by the Chairman of the Commission.

Chapter 1 : Summary of the Consultation

11. The discussions during the fifteen consultations highlighted the existence of different approaches to the working conditions, the specific needs and the value of the work performed by the Commission through its Subsidiary Bodies. On the one hand there is the technical and field-oriented approach of the Subsidiary Bodies which represent, in the different fields of activities, the views of the national experts of the member States. On the other hand there is the more global and systemic approach of the Commission itself, reflected at its Annual Session as well as at the informal meetings of Permanent Representatives in Geneva. These different approaches are not necessarily contradictory but, if the Commission is to implement a coherent programme of work and ensure the most efficient use of available resources, they would need to be reconciled.

12. Reflecting the common interests of the competent governmental Administrations, and in several fields of activity, also the national private sector, most Bureaux had a high opinion of the results of the work performed in the ECE, when adequate conditions of work are provided. Most of the time,

they consider the work performed to be useful for the strengthening of international cooperation in the region as well as serving the national interests of member States. This appreciation was shown by representatives of west European, north American, central and east European as well as Mediterranean countries. Interestingly enough, the value attributed to the results obtained by the Subsidiary Bodies did not generally differ, regardless of whether the activity was classified as a priority or a non-priority area of activity by decision O (45).

13. The question of whether there was potential or actual duplication of work between the Subsidiary Bodies and other relevant international organizations was posed to all the Bureaux. Most national experts, and Bureaux members, are in an ideal position to address this question since they are also directly involved in the work performed in other relevant governmental or non-governmental organizations. It appeared during the consultations that a considerable effort is made by the ECE to avoid such duplication of effort which could lead to a misuse of limited resources. If such duplication were to develop, national Administrations would certainly propose the discontinuance of the work concerned. In spite of the efforts already made to avoid duplication, some Bureaux felt that a special effort was needed to ensure that the fullest information was available on work under way or foreseen in other organizations, in particular the OECD, when reviewing the programme of work.

14. Concerning the use of resources, the Bureaux indicated that the efforts towards rationalization had to continue. Some specific problems were identified and are described in Chapter 2 (paras. 39-42: Methods of work).

15. Most of the Bureaux, rather than accepting the need for a reduction of their field of activity, have urged that it be strengthened. They explained that a restriction of their mandate and consequently of their resources could lead to a marginalization of their work. This fear of losing even in part the instrument of cooperation provided by the ECE is another indication that the work performed in this framework is highly valued.

16. The difficulties encountered in obtaining adequate resources was systematically addressed. The Bureaux indicated that, if they had inadequate secretariat resources (human, financial and material), the quality of the work performed by the Subsidiary Bodies would fall below the critical point. Under such circumstances, the interest of member States to continue participating in the affected activities would substantially diminish. This critical level seems to be very near in some fields (see Chapter 3), particularly those which had to face additional work due to the rapid modifications in the region and those which had been severely penalized by the reallocation of resources decided in decision O (45) and/or by the decisions on personnel management procedures taken for the United Nations as a whole. The reduction in the number of formal meetings (i.e. with interpretation), leading to informal meetings without interpretation or to the holding of biennial meetings only, was also mentioned by some Bureaux as a very serious obstacle to efficient programme delivery.

17. Furthermore, the Bureaux indicated that if the quality of the work could not be maintained, possibly leading to discontinuance, such activities would

have to be continued in other organizations which would accept to host it (OECD, FAO, UNCTAD, ISO, etc.). The inconvenience of such a move would reside in the fact that within the large Membership of the Commission, all the member States have equal status, whereas this could probably not be ensured in alternative fora and could be detrimental to some Members of the Commission.

18. According to the Bureaux, it could certainly be said that the level of participation in the work of the Commission depends to a large extent on the quality and relevance of the elements included in the programme of work performed and the quality and quantity of the service provided by the Organization to the national experts. The level of participation and representation will also influence the quality and utility of the work performed.

19. The Bureaux all noted that the end of the "bloc" confrontation had transformed the very nature of the cooperation in the region. The elements of the programme of work, jointly adopted, now reflected areas where work was done without any ideological component but in the common and general interest. This new atmosphere of cooperation had led most Subsidiary Bodies to adapt their working methods. The new political developments in the region had radically and positively modified the climate for the "technical" cooperation performed by the Subsidiary Bodies. It would seem logical, therefore, that the more "political" Commission acknowledge this evolution by taking duly into account the inputs given by the national experts of the member States participating in the different Subsidiary Bodies. More efficient ways to ensure the necessary communication between the "technical" and the "political" levels of the Commission would help the latter to give guidance to its Subsidiary Bodies, implement its own mandate, and ensure provision of adequate means for the work of its Subsidiary Bodies.

Chapter 2 : Cross-sectoral issues

20. The following views were expressed by the representatives of most of the Subsidiary Bodies. They indicate common concerns and similar perceptions of the present situation at the level of the Subsidiary Bodies. They also address cross-sectoral issues which will, most probably, have to be dealt with at the level of the Commission, in close cooperation with the Subsidiary Bodies concerned.

Interest and involvement of member States in the activities of the Subsidiary Bodies

21. Although the large membership of the Commission, together with the equal status of its member States, are always considered as one of the key comparative advantages of the UN/ECE when compared with other organizations, e.g. OECD, FAO, the participation of national experts in the different activities of the Subsidiary Bodies is unequal. The lack of participation frequently diminishes the theoretical comparative advantage of the large membership.

22. Among the reasons which could explain the relative lack of participation of some members, the following were mentioned repeatedly:

(a) financial problems for some countries to cover the travel costs of their experts to meetings held in Geneva, in particular for countries in transition, newly independent States and distant countries;

(b) lack of a Permanent Mission in Geneva for some countries (e.g. Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Republic of Moldova);

(c) technical difficulties encountered by the secretariat in contacting the relevant authorities of some countries, in particular of the newly independent States;

(d) different ranking, in the national lists of priorities, given to activities in the framework of the UN/ECE. Some activities (transport, environment, statistics, steel, agriculture, timber, energy, chemicals ...) were considered by most member States as highly interesting. On the other hand, the relatively unequal participation of national experts in other fields of activity (the Senior Economic Advisers constitute one example) may illustrate a relatively lower interest from the membership of the Commission in general. Nevertheless, most, if not all, activities of the Commission were still considered to be very important from the point of view of the national experts who actively participated.

23. It is also to be noted that Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kirghizstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have never been represented in a meeting held in Geneva under the auspices of the ECE since 5 October 1992 when the Commission welcomed their immediate participation in its activities.

Interest and involvement of the private sector

24. The participation and the involvement of representatives of the private sectors (Associations, private companies) in activities held in the framework of the Commission had recently increased. There was now a tendency to include representatives of industry in national delegations. Nevertheless, this practice depended to a large extent on national structures and on the issues dealt with by the different Subsidiary Bodies.

25. In fields such as timber, chemical industry and steel, for example, the Subsidiary Bodies constitute the only international fora where representatives of the private sector (mainly the producers) can collect comprehensive information on export markets and can meet with governmental representatives of countries in transition to a market economy. The mixed composition of many delegations (governmental and private sector) constitutes one of the characteristics of the ECE in many fields.

26. Traditionally, some of the UN/ECE activities were closely connected with the "East-West" trade in industrial or semi-industrial products as well as raw materials and their accession to new markets. This type of activity, including dissemination of statistical trade data, identification of trade partners and creation of business opportunities, had recently been affected to a large extent by the political and economic reforms undertaken in central and eastern Europe. The end of the cold war had also resulted in the opening of existing fora to new partners and the creation of new regional institutions (among them some financial institutions such as the EBRD). This development

had contributed to the strengthening of relations between governments and private circles in the countries of central and eastern Europe which were in transition to a market economy, on the one hand, and countries from western Europe and north America on the other. This evolution of the instruments of cooperation in the region tended also to diminish the relative importance of the UN/ECE which was no longer the only bridge between the east and the west of the region. This situation could open the door for potential duplication of work but could also give a new impetus to the Commission. For this reason, the identification and periodical re-evaluation of the comparative advantages of the different organizations active in the region remained vital, given the limited resources available.

Cooperation between ECE Divisions

27. The cooperation between the different Subsidiary Bodies was, in general, only ensured by the secretariat, most of the time on an ad hoc basis.

28. The development of direct contacts between national experts in different fields would be, according to representatives of many Bureaux, an effective tool to support efforts undertaken to avoid intra-ECE duplication of work. The few cross-sectoral Joint Working Groups (environment and economics for example) constituted in this context interesting means of ensuring cross-sectoral cooperation which could serve as examples. The Bureaux had indicated their interest in finding ways to strengthen the cooperation between each other by direct contacts, and not only through the secretariat.

29. Coordination between the different activities at the technical level was still left to a large extent to the secretariat and the national administrations, but there still seemed to be room for significant improvements.

Cooperation between the Subsidiary Bodies and other relevant international organizations

30. Coordination between the Subsidiary Bodies of the Commission and the other relevant international organizations is ensured by the following means:

(a) inter-secretariat coordination, e.g. in the trade facilitation field, between the ECE Trade Division, the ISO, the IEC and the CCITT, and in the statistical field between the Conference of European Statisticians, the OECD and EUROSTAT (Joint Programme Review);

(b) participation by the same national experts in meetings of different organizations;

(c) active participation or attendance as observers of representatives of other relevant international organizations in the meetings of the UN/ECE (OECD, IMF, ISO, etc.) and vice versa;

(d) Joint Working Groups, e.g. the Joint FAO/ECE/ILO Committee on Forest Technology, Management and Training or the Joint FAO/ECE Working Party on Forest Economics and Statistics.

31. Since some countries which are members of the UN/ECE are not members of other relevant organizations (OECD, FAO for example), activities in the framework of the UN/ECE constitute, in some cases, the only "bridge" to other relevant organizations. Should the UN/ECE cease to be active in such fields, the only alternative for those countries would be to join the other organizations. At the present time, and for varying reasons, this is not possible or not desired by some countries and/or the organizations.

Assistance to economies in transition

32. In addition to the regular activities contained in their programme of work, which have already a significant and positive impact for the countries which are in transition to a market economy, all the Subsidiary Bodies have included in their programme of work specific activities particularly designed to assist the transition process, in implementation of the Commission's decisions at its forty-fifth and subsequent sessions.

33. According to decision O (45), a particular accent has been put on the organization of workshops. This method of work was unanimously considered by the Bureaux to be a very useful, flexible and pragmatic instrument of cooperation. Nevertheless, the question of the financing of such activities was raised on many occasions. According to the representatives of most Bureaux, the approach pursued by the ECE was based on the needs indicated by countries hosting workshops, particularly countries in transition. This flexible and pragmatic approach might explain the difficulties to integrate the different workshops into a global concept.

34. In this context the Senior Economic Advisers had not felt themselves to be competent to undertake the mandate given them in decisions D (45) and B (46), namely to coordinate the programme of workshops. A global evaluation of the programme of workshops might be difficult to achieve but it would be important that the effort be made.

Sustainable development

35. Most Subsidiary Bodies had strengthened their activities in order to integrate in their programme of work activities related to the strengthening of the principle of sustainable development.

Dissemination of the results of the activities of the Subsidiary Bodies

36. Considering the high value most member States attached to the results of the important work done under the auspices of the UN/ECE, it was felt necessary, by most of the Bureaux, to ensure a well targeted, extensive and low cost dissemination of such results.

37. Nevertheless, for some Bureaux, the results of specific activities seemed to have lost much of their relevance by the time they were disseminated. This could constitute wasted efforts and an inefficient use of available resources. The Conference of European Statisticians had undertaken to analyse the statistical publications of the ECE. Other Subsidiary Bodies had also started a systematic evaluation of their non-statistical publications. Most Bureaux considered this to be a first step in the right direction.

38. For the Bureaux, this issue constituted an area for common reflection and cooperation where a cross-sectoral approach should be developed between the Bureaux.

Methods of work

39. In accordance with decision O (45), the duration of the meetings of some Subsidiary Bodies had been reduced, which had forced them to adapt and sometimes reduce their programme of work. Nevertheless, several Bodies had chosen to reduce only minimally their programme of work or had even faced an increase of work. The combination of these elements had resulted in an increasing resort to informal meetings, generally held in English, without interpretation. This practice was considered to be detrimental to the work of the Bodies concerned.

40. Also in accordance with decision O (45), some Subsidiary Bodies had had to hold less meetings during the year and, in some cases, meet only every two years. In view of the rapid developments occurring in the region, the Bureaux concerned felt that it was particularly difficult, if not impossible, to perform efficient work under such conditions.

41. Taking into account the large number of meetings held both in the framework of the UN/ECE and in other organizations, and the fact that national delegates often cover the activities of different organizations, with resulting high travel costs, some Bureaux highlighted the need for better coordination between the calendars of meetings of related organizations and, whenever possible, the organization of back-to-back UN/ECE meetings.

42. The Bureaux were also highly interested in ensuring a more active communication with the Commission itself. In this context, they felt that the consultations held in accordance with decision B (47), paragraph 4, constituted a useful and interesting mechanism which should be continued. The consultation procedure could be adapted or extended so that the Permanent Representations in Geneva could benefit, more directly and in an extensive way, from the information and views expressed during the consultations between the Chairman of the Commission and the Bureaux. The informal and direct character of the talks should nevertheless be preserved.

Role of the Bureaux

43. Most of the Bureaux indicated that their role had to be strengthened so as to ensure a coherent action in the period between the meetings of the Subsidiary Bodies and to offer more flexibility so as to be able to respond to the rapid changes in the region. Different approaches had been experimented with:

(a) enlargement of the Bureau and/or meetings of the Bureaux between the ordinary sessions of the Subsidiary Bodies;

(b) nomination of coordinators and rapporteurs, in charge of specific elements of the programme of work, meeting between the ordinary sessions of the Subsidiary Bodies.

44. Joint Meetings of Bureaux were also mentioned as a means to ensure a more coherent approach to cross-sectoral issues.

Resources available to the Subsidiary Bodies

45. In addressing this question, the representatives of the Bureaux of the different Subsidiary Bodies indicated that it had to be considered in the light of the objectives identified and incorporated in the programme of work of the Commission and its Subsidiary Bodies and the work accomplished in other organizations.

46. The needed resources, human, financial and material, had to be considered in correlation with the activities to be performed by the secretariat and/or by the experts. Most of them reflected basic needs while some of them differed according to the programme of work of each Subsidiary Body.

47. In some cases, additional human resources were provided by other organizations working in cooperation with the UN/ECE or even by member States. In one case (steel) an extra-budgetary contribution had even been granted by Japan.

48. In some cases the lack of resources, resulting from the implementation of decision O (45) and/or the decisions on resource policy for the United Nations as a whole, had hindered the normal servicing performed by the secretariat. In some fields of activity, this situation has resulted in delays in the preparation of basic documents, postponements or freezing of elements in the programme of work. The major problems encountered by the Conference of European Statisticians illustrated the dangers of such a situation.

Chapter 3 : Comparative advantages and specific problems

49. This Chapter addresses mainly the complex issue of potential duplication of work between the ECE and governmental and/or non-governmental organizations active in the region in fields similar to those covered by the Subsidiary Bodies. It reflects the perception of the issue by the concerned Bureaux, which are often composed of experts also participating in the work of other relevant organizations.

50. The wide membership of the ECE in which all members have equal status constitutes a horizontal advantage, in comparison with other organizations, which was regularly highlighted by the Bureaux. This advantage is strengthened when virtually all member States participate in the work of the Commission and its Subsidiary Bodies.

Working Party on Standardization Policies

51. The Working Party is the only international forum where questions related to standardization policies are addressed, and where representatives of Governments can exchange views and information on standardization policies. This makes it a unique forum, with no apparent alternative at present. In order to work efficiently, it needs to be regularly informed and to cooperate closely with governmental and non-governmental "standards-setting" organizations, such as ISO, CCITT, IEC, CEN, CENELEC. There is a very clear

distinction between the work of the Working Party and the other standards-setting organizations. Cooperation is ensured through their secretariats and by the active participation of representatives of the various organizations in the sessions of the Working Party. The fact that many national experts participate in the work of the other organizations diminishes the risk of duplication of efforts.

Senior Economic Advisers to ECE Governments

52. The work of this Subsidiary Body covers two broad categories:

53. The first category groups the yearly economic analysis performed independently by the Division for Economic Analysis and Projections. The Bureau of the Senior Economic Advisers highlighted the need to ensure the independence of the secretariat in the elaboration of the "Economic Survey for Europe" and the "Economic Bulletin" but indicated that due consideration should be given to reflecting the needs of member countries in the structure of the "Survey". This did not mean that the substance should be influenced by the member countries. The Bureau recognized that similar studies existed already "on the market", but they stressed the usefulness of a certain "competition" between different organizations in analysing the evolution of the economic situation in the region. In this context, they emphasized that the membership of the Commission and the equal status of its members were to be borne in mind. The increasing difficulties encountered by the secretariat in covering a region characterized by a substantial increase in the number sovereign States were mentioned in connection with resource difficulties.

54. The second category groups activities essentially consisting of exchanges of views and experience relating to global economic policies and specific issues. The supportive role of the secretariat has also been recognized. In this category, in which other organizations are also active (OECD, EBRD, IMF, World Bank, etc.), the relatively low involvement of many member States may indicate that the comparative advantage of the ECE has diminished and did not reflect a priority for the experts of these States. The Bureau of the Senior Economic Advisers has indicated that the multinational and medium- and long-term analysis should be pursued, in spite of the difficulties of the exercise.

55. Some issues dealt with by the Senior Economic Advisers, such as privatization, are also dealt with, to a certain extent, by the Commission itself, during its annual session, and e.g. by the Committee on the Development of Trade through its Working Party on International Contract Practices in Industry. A need for close coordination is obvious. Specific elements of privatization are also dealt with by other Subsidiary Bodies (steel, chemical industry, etc.).

Conference of European Statisticians

56. The Conference of European Statisticians groups the Directors of the National Statistical Offices of the region. It works closely with other regional statistical organizations such as EUROSTAT or the OECD and is part of the United Nations statistical network. It is an indispensable instrument for the implementation of the mandate of the Commission in the essential role of collection, treatment and dissemination of statistical data. The

participation of Directors of National Statistical Offices in the work of the Conference indicates the high value placed by the member States on this organization for the coordination of national statistical policies in the region.

57. Adequate secretariat support had not been ensured for a relatively long period, leading to postponement of important activities. The resource situation had recently improved which should permit the Conference to remain an important part of the Commission's machinery despite the increase of work resulting from the recent changes in the region and the increasing membership.

58. To ensure more flexibility between the annual sessions of the Conference, the Bureau has been enlarged and its role strengthened. A systematic evaluation of the impact of ECE statistical publications is being conducted in cooperation with the relevant Subsidiary Bodies.

59. To avoid duplication of efforts, an improvement in the cooperation with the OECD is necessary and will depend to a large extent on the flexibility of the OECD itself.

Working Party on Facilitation of International Trade Procedures (WP.4) (EDIFACT)

60. Due to the high technicality of the work of the Committee on the Development of Trade in the field of trade facilitation, a special consultation was arranged with the Bureaux of the WP.4 and its two Groups of Experts.

61. The framework offered by the WP.4 and the Group of Experts is particular in several ways. It constitutes a forum where users of trade facilitation standards (paper and EDI) can meet with representatives of national administrations and standard setting organizations to develop modern facilitation techniques. The geographical scope of its work in the field of EDI extends beyond the ECE region since its structure includes five regional secretariats (Pan American EDIFACT Board, Western European EDIFACT Board, Eastern European EDIFACT Board, Australia/New Zealand EDIFACT Board and Asia EDIFACT Board). Through this decentralized structure, regional Boards, member States and/or professional users make extensive inputs as well as important financial investments to the work finalized in the framework of the Commission.

62. Communication and cooperation with other relevant organizations are ensured by the participation of representatives in the respective meetings organized during the year. Furthermore, an inter-secretariat standing group (ISO, ECE, CCITT, IEC) ensures the necessary coordination between the secretariats. A similar body has been created recently between ECE, UNCTAD and ITC so as to avoid potential duplication, particularly with the UNCTAD present and future activities in this field (FALPRO, Asycuda, Trade Efficiency 2000, Trade Points).

63. The importance of action to promote awareness of modern facilitation techniques has been highlighted, particularly in the context of assistance to countries in transition. Different projects, requiring adequate financial

support, are under preparation to strengthen these efforts (technical assistance, training, etc.). The Bureaux also considered that the work of ECE should be complemented by the work of bodies such as the Customs Cooperation Council to help countries in transition. Cooperation with the EBRD is also under way.

64. Although the provision of adequate human resources had been seriously delayed in the recent past, the Bureau considered that staff resources now seemed to be sufficient but that the secretariat was short of the necessary equipment and travel funds.

Senior Advisers to ECE Governments on Science and Technology

65. The recent political transformation in the region had led to a change in the perception of the role of this Subsidiary Body, by delegations both from the west and from the economies in transition. More emphasis was being placed on science and technology policy and on the exchange of experience.

66. The OECD Committee on Scientific and Technological Policy also dealt with science and technology policy. The Bureau of the Senior Advisers indicated that the ECE approach reviewed the principal changes taking place over a four year period whereas the in-d pth study of the OECD took more time. This faster adaptation to changes and the wider coverage, due to its larger membership, constitutes the main advantages of the ECE body. The Bureau underlined the cooperation between the secretariats of the two organizations, particularly with respect to the realization of science and technology indicators by the OECD for the economies in transition. The Senior Advisers had developed a specific activity in the inventory of safety guidelines in biotechnology.

67. The Bureau underlined the effects of the very limited time allowed to them to conduct their work and drew attention to the non-participation of many countries, including countries in transition.

Working Party on the Chemical Industry

68. The Working Party brings together representatives of Governments and industry (mainly represented by large associations of private industry such as the Chemical Industry Council - CEFIC). This configuration is unique at the level of the region and constitutes an important asset for the achievement of sustainable industrial development, the chemical industry being one of the major components to which special attention needed to be paid in this context. The fact that the "High-level Meeting on Sustainable Development in the Chemical Industry", held in Warsaw in March 1992, was initiated and prepared by the Working Party illustrated its importance for participants.

69. Cooperation with the private sector is ensured by the mixed composition of many national delegations and by the active participation of representatives of associations such as the CEFIC. The Bureau indicated that the quality of the statistical information included in the "Annual Review of the Chemical Industry" had partly motivated the OECD to discontinue publishing its own review in 1983.

70. Some activities of the Working Party, including issues related to the creation of market infrastructures, restructuring of the chemical sector in countries in transition, sustainable development and issues related to privatization, were closely linked with activities undertaken by other Subsidiary Bodies such as the Senior Economic Advisers, the Senior Advisers on Environmental and Water Problems or the Committee on the Development of Trade. The Bureau indicated that intra-ECE cooperation could be strengthened to benefit from synergies.

Timber Committee

71. The FAO European Forestry Commission and the IUFRO (lead organization in international research of the timber sector) are also active in the field of timber. They participate in the work of the Timber Committee.

72. The approach chosen by the Timber Committee is more oriented to the forestry products, and more market oriented than the work conducted in the FAO. Furthermore, arrangements with FAO, although complex, practically guarantee that there is no duplication. The coordination of work is also facilitated by the existence of Joint Working Groups (FAO/ECE and FAO/ECE/ILO). For the countries members of the Commission but not members of the FAO (Russian Federation, Belarus, Ukraine and some other CIS countries), the Timber Committee operates a "bridging-function" with the FAO, which is also in the interest of the FAO (for collection of statistical data for example).

Working Party on Steel

73. The Working Party is the oldest and most universal body in the steel sector, works jointly with governmental and industry representatives, brings together steel-producing countries from all over the world (in particular Europe, North America, Latin America, Japan, Middle East) and undertakes activities which reflect the priorities of both the steel producers and their Governments. The link between governmental and industrial representatives constituted by the Working Party is considered, by the Bureau, to be a major contribution by the Commission to the efforts made in the region and beyond to strengthen economic cooperation.

74. The IISI (International Iron and Steel Institute) is also active in the field of steel but is composed of steel producers only. The OECD has chosen a political approach and is composed of civil servants only. IISI, OECD as well as the Commission of the EC participate in the Working Party. A special effort by OECD and ECE to ensure complementarity without duplication in the collection of statistical data is particularly important.

75. The Bureau indicated that the importance of the ECE as a forum to exchange information had been illustrated by the confidence put by the World Bank in the Working Party to pilot the review of ironworks of countries in transition, in cooperation with the IISI and the EBRD, and by the willingness of the Japanese industry to support financially a highly qualified trainee for a period of two years.

Working Party on Engineering Industries and Automation

76. Despite the great need for assistance expressed by the countries in transition, the Bureau felt it would be extremely difficult for this Subsidiary Body to fulfil entirely its mandate and the ambitious programme of work.

77. One of the reasons was the magnitude and diversity of the engineering industries and automation in the economic activity of the countries of the region. This meant that, in deciding on its programme of work, the Working Party needed to achieve a judicious balance between the interests of western countries (upgrading of standards requirements and creation of business opportunities) and the urgent needs of the countries in transition (restructuring, privatization, training, technological innovation, etc.). In this context, the "Annual Review of Engineering Industries and Automation" provided Governments and industries with a useful overview of developments and short-term trends and a basis for comparing national performance. The mixed composition of the national delegations also constituted a unique opportunity to create business contacts between the private and the governmental interests represented in the Working Party.

78. The Bureau highlighted the fact that, if there was to be a viable programme, the Working Party should meet every year. The two-year cycle of meetings, resulting from decision O (45) would ultimately lead to the demise of the Working Party.

Inland Transport Committee

79. With regard to the activities carried out in other international organizations, the Bureau indicated that the Governments participating in the European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT) had agreed that ECMT should be a forum for transport policy discussions, while the technical and legal work should be carried out by the ECE. In this division of labour, ECE would provide ECMT with information concerning the progress of ECE's work and also transform ECMT political decisions into concrete and practical technical results and, as far as possible, into binding legal instruments. The Bureau considered therefore that the risk of duplication between ECMT and ECE was minimal. The active involvement of the secretariat and most member States of the ECE in the first Pan-European Transport Conference at ministerial level in 1991 and in the preparation of the second Conference in 1993 made the Bureau confident that the necessary coordination existed between the relevant regional organizations.

80. As a consequence of the high value attributed by the member States to the work of the Committee, including the initiation and follow-up of international agreements, such as the European Agreement Concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road (ADR), and the conduct of regional projects, such as the Trans-European North-South Motorway Project and the Trans-European Railway Project, the Bureau was confident that the necessary resources, human and financial, could be found through regular or extraordinary contributions and that the present difficult situation would be solved.

Committee on Energy

81. The Bureau stressed the importance of the cooperation in the energy sector in connection with the two general orientations of the Commission, namely assistance to economies in transition and achievement of sustainable development. The activities in the different fields (gas, electric power, coal, energy efficiency) were considered by the experts to be getting better but still not widely enough known.

82. The innovative approach developed through the "Energy Efficiency 2000" and the "Global Energy Efficiency 21 - an interregional Approach" Projects were considered to be important contributions to the recently strengthened efforts to cope with both the development challenges, including in countries in transition, and the environmental challenges. The need for complementarity with other organizations or processes, such as the European Energy Charter, the G-24 Working Group on Energy and the IAEA, were highlighted.

83. The shortage of resources allocated for this activity was criticized by the Bureau which highlighted the quality of the professional staff offering support to the Committee. The Committee had obtained extra-budgetary contributions as the only way to support the activities in the field of energy efficiency.

Committee on Agriculture

84. The Bureau presented the adaptation of the priorities and programme of work of the Committee which had resulted from decision O (45) and from the changing climate for cooperation in the region. The substantial structural changes illustrated the flexibility shown by some bodies in adapting their activities to new realities.

85. The Bureau indicated that the ECE and OECD approaches were different. Whereas OECD worked mainly on policy aspects (integration of agricultural and environmental policies), the Committee worked mainly on the economic, technical legal and regulatory measures deriving from the overall policies, as well as on their practical implementation.

86. Most of the Committee's activities are conducted jointly with the FAO. The Bureau referred to the ad hoc Working Group on ECE/FAO cooperation in the field of agriculture, held in Berlin in 1990. It was on the double basis of the findings of this meeting, and of decision O (45) that the Committee reviewed its terms of reference and priorities. The Bureau explained that the replacement of two previous Working Parties by two joint ECE/FAO Bodies means, among others: (a) sharing of tasks to service the Working Parties (e.g. new P-3 post in the ECE Regional Office for Europe in Rome for environmental activities); (b) joint elaboration of the terms of reference. The opportunity thus created to establish contacts and cooperation between FAO on the one hand, and ECE's non-FAO members on the other, was stressed. Joint meetings were held between the Bureau of the Committee and the Executive Committee (a kind of enlarged Bureau) of the FAO European Commission on Agriculture.

87. The Bureau indicated that the allocation by decision O (45) of 4 half-days of official meeting every 18 months to each Working Party was quite

insufficient to implement a viable programme of work. This was a clear example of a decision conflicting with the realistic and efficient implementation of a programme.

Committee on the Development of Trade

88. The programme of work of the Committee is composed of two main elements. The first, "Trade facilitation" is considered by the Commission to be a priority area of activity identified by decision O (45). The other, "Trade and trade related issues", is not. Due to the technicalities of the trade facilitation activities, a special consultation was arranged with the Bureaux of the WP.4 and its groups of experts (see the specific reporting, paras. 60 to 64).

89. Potential synergies between the work conducted by the Committee and by most of the other Subsidiary Bodies have been identified. It seems, nevertheless, that the Committee needs to find a new place in the Commission in order effectively to fulfil its important mandate. The recent transformations in the region as well as the resource difficulties encountered by the secretariat to enable it fully to assist the Committee, particularly in the elaboration and transmission of papers for the annual session of the Committee, constituted elements of preoccupation for the Bureau.

Committee on Human Settlements

90. The Bureau indicated that the Committee had recently re-evaluated and restructured its work, and reduced the number of its programme elements from 17 to 9. The structure of the work was also modified to respond to the current needs of member countries. The work now focused more on assistance to countries in transition and aspects related to sustainable human settlements developments where new ecological principles must be taken into account. The enlargement of the Bureau should also strengthen its coordinating role.

91. Being the only regional intergovernmental organization focusing on important housing issues, the Committee was described by the Bureau as an important contact network giving access to the experience of all the countries represented and thus improving the quality of the work in particular countries or groups of countries. The "Compendium of Building Regulations" and the "Housing Policy Guidelines" were particularly mentioned in this context.

Senior Advisers to ECE Governments on Environmental and Water Problems

92. The strengthened Bureau underlined the efforts of the Senior Advisers to respond efficiently to the dramatic changes occurring in the region, to define their pan-European role in the new regional context, to become more policy oriented, to strive towards a framework of strategic planning and management, to strengthen cooperation with other Principal Subsidiary Bodies and other international organizations active in the region on environmental protection, rational use of natural resources and sustainable development, and to prepare themselves for follow-up action to the Rio and Lucerne Conferences.

93. The Bureau highlighted the close cooperation with the Senior Economic Advisers through a Joint Working Group and indicated that the Senior Advisers

on Environment were examining the implications at the regional level of the outcome of UNCED. They expected to propose concrete action to the Commission in this respect. Indications were given of the considerable contribution being made to the Lucerne Conference "Environment for Europe", in cooperation with other regional organizations. The Bureau stressed that the follow-up to this pan-European process should be taken up by already existing regional or sub-regional mechanisms.

94. The Bureau qualified the Subsidiary Body as the only regional mechanism striving towards convergence of environmental policies of west, central and east European and North American countries, on the basis of an equal footing.

95. Since 30% of the resources allocated to service the Senior Advisers and the three new conventions were still frozen, the programme of work had not been fully implemented during 1992. A number of projects had been postponed and new projects were put on a waiting list until the resource situation was normalized.